

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 5330

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, LI

SUBJECT: "CONFUSIONISM" IN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

1. THE LIBERIAN AGE JULY 21 REPORTED AN "OMINOUS CONFRONTATION" BETWEEN JUSTICE MINISTER OLIVER BRIGHT AND ALFONSO K. DORMU, ASSISTANT MINISTER OF JUSTICE FOR CODIFICATION. ACCORDING TO THE AGE, SINCE DORMU RETURNED FROM THE U.S. LAST YEAR HE HAS BEEN LIVING IN A HOUSE OWNED BY BRIGHT FOR WHICH HE (DORMU) HAS NOT BEEN PAYING RENT. DORMU INFORMED THE LIBERIAN AGE THAT BRIGHT HAD TOLD HIM RECENTLY TO VACATE THE HOUSE WITHIN 12 DAYS BUT THAT HE HAD NOT YET AGREED TO DO SO. BRIGHT THEN TOOK AWAY THE FRONT AND BACK DOORS OF THE HOUSE. BRIGHT STATED THAT HE HAD GONE TO THE HOUSE IN SINKOR TO DO SOME RENOVATIONS WHICH INCLUDED REMOVING DOORS AND SOME OTHER THINGS. WHEN THE TWO MET OUTSIDE THE HOUSE A SMALL TUSSLE ENSURED WHEN DR. DORMU GRABBED THE DOOR OF BRIGHT'S CAR.

2. THE TWO PROTAGONISTS PRESENT CONFLICTING BACKGROUND FOR THIS CONFRONTATION. ACCORDING TO THE AGE, DR. DORMU ALLEGED THAT BRIGHT IS JEALOUS OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, ADDING THAT BRIGHT HAD SHOWN A SENSE OF INSECURITY SINCE HE (DORMU) WAS ASKED BY THE PRESIDENT TO ASSUME THE POSITION OF ASSISTANT MINISTER OF JUSTICE FOR
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CODIFICATION. "I HAVE BEEN WRITING HIM A SERIES OF MEMOS COMPLAINING OF IRREGULARITIES IN THE MINISTRY WHICH HE DOES NOT LIKE TO HEAR." BRIGHT'S VIEW IS THAT DR.DORMU IS A "CONFUSIONIST", WHO HAD PUT THE MINISTRY IN AN UPROAR SINCE HIS ARRIVAL.

3. COMMENT: DR. DORMU PROVIDED MUCH OF THE BACKGROUN

MATERIAL FOR THE PREPARATION OF EMBASSY AIRGRAM A-33, HUMAN RIGHTS: LIBERIA'S NEW SEDITION LAW, DATED JUNE 23, 1978. HE IS A STRICT CONSTRUCTIONIST IN INTERPRETING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AND A STRONG PROPONENT OF PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S UNIFICATION POLICY. HE TOLD THE POLITICAL CONNSELOR RECENTLY THAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO PREPARE AN ADVISORY OPINION FOR THE PRESIDENT CONCERNING THE RIGHT OF BANK EMPLOYEES TO ORGANIZE A UNION. HE SAID IT WAS ASSUMED AT THE JUSTICE MINISTRY THAT HE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT BANK EMPLOYEES DID NOT HAVE THIS RIGHT. WHEN HE PRESENTED A BRIEF TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE GIVING THE OPINION THAT, ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION, BANK EMPLOYEES DID INDEED HAVE THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE A UNION, THE JUSTICE MINISTER WAS DISCOMFITED AND DISPLEASED. THE PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, ACCEPTED THE BRIEF, ACCORDING TO DORMU.

4. DORMU'S MAIN TASK SINCE HIS RETURN FROM THE U.S. HAS BEEN TO REVIEW AND EDIT THE REVISED LAWS REGARDING OFFENSES AGAINST INTERNAL SECURITY SUBMITTED TO THE GOL BY THE CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBERIAN CODIFICATION PROJECT IN 1973. HE HAS WORKED TO LIBERALIZE THESE LAWS AND TO REMOVE OUT-DATED TERMINOLOGY (E.G. REFERENCES TO "ABORIGINES"). HIS DESIRE TO INTERPRET THE CONSTITUTION STRICTLY AND HIS COMPLAINTS AGAINST INCOMPETENCE
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IN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ARE PROBABLY AT THE ROOT OF THE CHARGE OF "CONFUSIONISM" DIRECTED AGAINST HIM BY MINISTER BRIGHT AND OF BRIGHT'S ACTION IN ATTEMPTING TO EVICT HIM. DORMU IS AKRU AND THE FIRST OF HIS ETHNIC GROUP TO WRITE A BOOK (THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, EXPOSITION PRESS, 1970). BECAUSE HE IS BOTH A LIBERAL INFLUENCE AND AN EXAMPLE OF A TRIBAL PERSON RISING TO INFLUENTIAL POSITION, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR PRESIDENT TOLBERT TO DISMISS HIM OVER THIS INCIDENT. IF MINISTER BRIGHT PUSHES THE CASE OF "CONFUSIONISM" AGAINST DORMU, HOWEVER, THE LATTER IN THE END WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO GO.
CARTER

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